

Week Ending Friday, January 3, 2003

The President's Radio Address

December 28, 2002

Good morning. Two thousand two brought great challenges to America, and we had many successes at home and abroad. In 2002, our economy was still recovering from the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, and it was pulling out of a recession that began before I took office.

Our Government came together to pass an economic growth bill to jump-start the economy. We extended unemployment benefits for workers who lost their jobs after the terrorist attacks. Congress passed trade promotion authority, which gave me a stronger hand to help America's farmers and businesses sell their products abroad. And we worked together to enact terrorism insurance legislation, so our construction workers could get back on the job. As a result of these actions, the United States economy is growing again.

Our Nation learned of scandalous abuses by some corporate leaders, and so I signed the most sweeping corporate reforms in more than a half a century. We are strictly enforcing the laws against fraud and deception in corporate America because workers and investors must have confidence in America's businesses and business leaders.

America in 2002 continued our efforts to confront the danger of terrorism. We increased the security of our ports and coasts and airlines and created a new Department of Homeland Security. This Department will unite dozens of Federal agencies behind a single mission, protecting the American people. I hope the Senate will act quickly in the new session to confirm Governor Tom Ridge to serve as America's first Secretary of Homeland Security.

In 2002, the war on terror that began with the liberation of Afghanistan continued on many fronts. Working with our allies around the world, we captured top Al Qaida leaders,

destroyed terror training camps, and froze millions of dollars in terrorist assets.

In the new year, we will prosecute the war on terror with patience and focus and determination. With the help of a broad coalition, we will make certain that terrorists and their supporters are not safe in any cave or corner of the world.

The war on terror also requires us to confront the danger of catastrophic violence posed by Iraq and its weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations Security Council has unanimously affirmed that Saddam Hussein is a danger to his neighbors and to the peace of the world. The burden now is on Iraq's dictator to disclose and destroy his arsenal of weapons. If he refuses, then for the sake of peace, the United States will lead a coalition to disarm the Iraqi regime and free the Iraqi people.

Also in the new year, we will press on in the effort to turn our economic recovery into sustained economic growth. This economy is strong, and it can be stronger. I will work with Congress on a jobs and growth package to add momentum to the recovery and to put people back to work.

And one of my first priorities for the new Congress will be an extension of unemployment benefits for Americans who need them. We will also work to ensure that all Americans have access to high quality, affordable health care. We will keep our commitment to America's seniors by working to reform and modernize Medicare and include a prescription drug benefit to help seniors who are squeezed by rising drug prices.

We will tackle the crisis of frivolous lawsuits that drive up the cost of health care. We will continue to carry out the comprehensive education reforms signed into law last January, so no child in America is left behind. My administration will work to continue to remove barriers that hinder the good work of faith-based and community groups. And we will work to reauthorize the historic

welfare reform law that has improved so many lives.

Our successes in the past year have prepared the way for great progress in 2003. Working together, we can make America more prosperous and keep the peace in the world.

Thank you for listening, and Happy New Year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:05 a.m. on December 27 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Exchange With Reporters in Crawford, Texas

December 31, 2002

The President. Hi, guys. Happy New Year to everybody. Laura and I wish all our fellow Americans a prosperous and peaceful and a happy new year. We are really happy to be spending New Year here in Crawford, Texas. We'll be having our New Year's hamburger here in a minute. *[Laughter]*

I'll be glad to answer a few questions—Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press] and Patsy [Patricia Wilson, Reuters] and Mike [Mike Allen, Washington Post].

Situation in North Korea

Q. Sir, I'd like to ask you if I could, why are you not considering military action against a defiant, unstable, unpredictable, nuclear-armed North Korea?

The President. I view the North Korean situation as one that can be resolved peacefully, through diplomacy. The international community, particularly those countries close to North Korea, understand the stakes involved. I had a very good visit with President-elect Roh of South Korea. I've obviously talked to Jiang Zemin right here in Crawford about a nuclear-weapons-free Peninsula.

There is strong consensus, not only amongst the nations in the neighborhood and our friends but also with international organizations such as the IAEA, that North Korea

ought to comply with international regulations. I believe this can be done peacefully, through diplomacy, and we will continue to work that way. I take—all options, of course, are always on the table for any President, but by working with these countries we can resolve this.

Q. So you're not currently contemplating military action?

The President. Well, Ron, I believe this is not a military showdown; this is a diplomatic showdown. And we can resolve this peacefully.

Q. Sir, you—

The President. Hold on a second, please.

Q. Sorry, excuse me.

The President. And intend to work to resolve it peacefully. We've got good progress in talking to our friends. And I look forward to the fact that President-elect Roh is sending some people over here, and then he, himself, will come after he's been inaugurated.

Patsy, then John [John Roberts, CBS News].

North Korea/Iraq

Q. Sir, why should we be more worried about Saddam Hussein, who has no nuclear weapons, than Kim Chong-il, who is unstable and does have nuclear weapons?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's important to remember that Saddam Hussein was close to having a nuclear weapon. We don't know whether or not he has a nuclear weapon. We do expect him to disarm his weapons of mass destruction; that's what we expect.

Secondly, the international community has been trying to resolve the situation in Iraq through diplomacy for 11 years. And for 11 years, Saddam Hussein has defied the international community. And now we've brought the world together to send a clear signal: We expect him to disarm, to get rid of his weapons of mass destruction. The first step in determining whether or not he will do that was discouraging. His declaration was short, and the international community recognized that, that he wasn't forthcoming.

Again, I hope this Iraq situation will be resolved peacefully. One of my New Year's